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A DOWN TO EARTH SUPPLEMENT FOR THE YOUNG AND CURIOUS

Riding into Carbon Markets

A journey into the world of climate trade for children—who's paying, who's helping, and why it matters—plus a sweet green tale for tiny-tots!



The Climate Helper's Diary



Trishant Dev

A young observer shares what really goes on inside climate talks—SB62 at Bonn, Germany—and why the world's future depends on what happens there

25 June 2025, Bonn, Germany

Today was my last day in this new city. The sun was shining brightly in the early morning. The streets and neighbourhood were calm. Cyclists sped by and cafes slowly unfolded their canopies. I rushed towards the World Conference Centre—a glass-fronted building by the Rhine. That's where the future of our planet's climate is discussed every year this month. These are what we call 'climate talks'!

This year, 150+ countries are meeting here. They call it SB62, i.e. the 62nd session of the Subsidiary Bodies. These are meetings where all country folks prepare, make commitments, and sort out disagreements on how to fight climate change. It's like the world's mid-year check-in before the big annual climate

meet—the COP—happening later in the year.

Though, Bonn has a pleasant weather outside. People bike to work, trams glide by, rivers look clean, and the locality is green. The conference inside is a wholly different scene!

Countries are politely (and sometimes not-so-politely, lol!) arguing about cutting greenhouse gas emissions, about helping people battle extreme weather, and bickering over who will pay for what. They have been debating the phase-out plan for fossil fuels, technology sharing, and helping the most vulnerable during climate catastrophes.

Developed countries were dragging their feet on their financial commitments, while developing countries poked them to contribute more—both as a matter of responsibility and in line with their capabilities. There were disagreements

about how much is enough, who needs to pay, how fast, and in grants or loans! At least everyone agrees that the world is warming!

But deciding who does what first is tricky. It is ironic because right outside, Bonn's living spaces are cleaner, safer and resource-efficient. And inside, leaders are still figuring out how to get there. But that's why these talks matter: even a small agreement can help the world breathe easier! And deeper and cleaner!

A key theme this year was 'just transition,' meaning, how to shift away from coal, oil, and such stuff in a fair way, ensuring people have electricity and workers in fossil-fuel industries have green jobs. Another issue was climate finance. Poor countries need money to make solar and wind projects, and protect their people from extreme weather,

getting severe due to global warming.

And what was I doing in the midst of all of this? I was an Observer. I wasn't representing any country. But I could follow the meetings of the representatives, listen to what they said, and, when the space was open, even intervene to put my view point in a room full of negotiating countries. I was speaking at side events, where scientists, researchers, policymakers, and activists pushed for stronger action. Here, we could share our research, stories, and data with governments. Help them see affront, the impacts of climate change. Being an observer is like being a helper in the room, making sure climate commitments are fair, science-based, and people-centred.

One of my areas of work is carbon markets, which was also a theme under discussion. And what exactly are these? Think of them as systems where countries and companies trade the efforts they have taken to cut greenhouse gas emission to meet their climate promises. Like when someone, somewhere, does something that reduces emissions—such as protecting a forest, switching from coal to solar, or using cleaner stoves—they can earn a carbon credit. One carbon credit

means one tonne of carbon dioxide kept out of our air. These credits can then be sold to others who need help in meeting their emission reduction targets. Some countries and companies love carbon markets because it enables them to fund projects that reduce emissions. Sounds cool, right? But here's where it gets tricky.

Sometimes, carbon markets become a cover for those who keep polluting but claim to be 'climate-friendly' or 'climate-neutral' by just buying credits from somewhere else.

At Bonn, countries were debating how to make these markets fair and transparent. Many groups, including us from CSE as observers, are closely watching the participants to ensure that carbon markets are not misused for greenwashing. A practise whereby countries or companies look climate-friendly without making any real environmental change. It's like putting a band-aid on a broken bone!

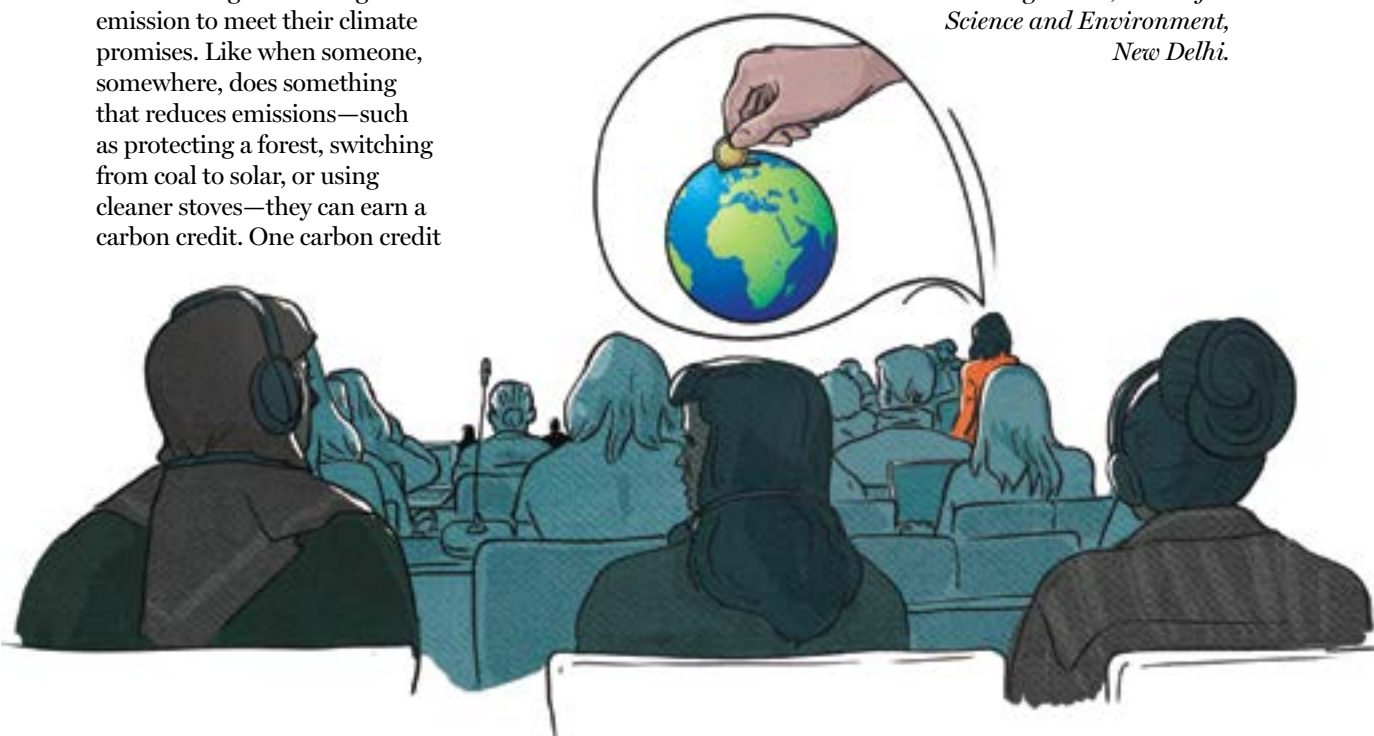
Witnessing these debates

makes me wonder why I even care about these details in the first place. This curiosity about the climate and our living spaces didn't start at a big international conference. It began much earlier, I believe. As a little one reading social studies and environment in school, and also, as a kid flipping through [Gobar Times](#) - a supplement where all the boring subjects came alive in the most creative stories. Yes, I grew up reading the very GT magazine! For a young reader, [Gobar Times](#) made the environment seem real, rooted, and worth caring for. It was sharp, fun, and packed with facts, and I'll admit, many of its pages ended up as cut-outs for my school projects. Hehe...

Tomorrow, as I return from Bonn, it feels fitting to publish this in GT, the magazine where, as a kid, I once read about the climate meetings that I now attend.

See you later, alligator!

The author is Deputy Programme Manager, Climate Change Team, Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi.

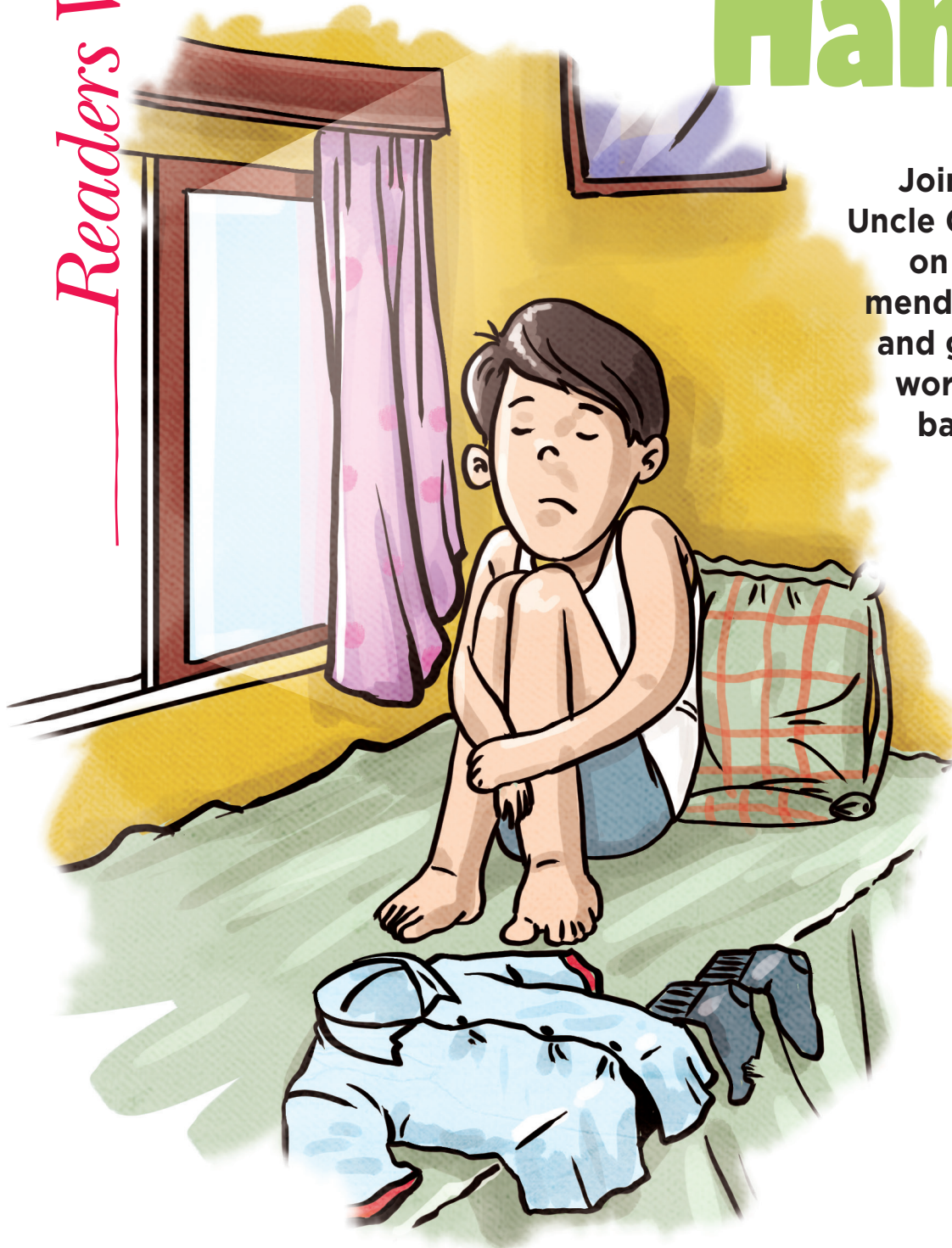


Uncle Green Hands

Join Shyam and
Uncle Green Hands
on a journey of
mending, reusing,
and greening the
world with seed
balls and care!



**Rukshana
Tabassum**



The holidays were over, and school was about to begin again. Shyam sat near the window with his chin on his knees. His school uniform was laid out on the bed. It was clean, but a little faded. His shoes lay under the cot. One had a small tear near the toe.

“I want new shoes,” he whispered. “And a new bag too.”

His mother was folding clothes. “But Shyam *beta*,” she said gently, “your uniform is just fine. And your shoes—Papa will take them to cobbler *chacha*. He’ll mend them like new.” Shyam’s eyes filled with tears.

“But everyone gets new things when school starts...”

Papa walked in with his usual soft smile.

“New year doesn’t mean new shoes,” he said. “It means a new you. New learning. New thinking.”

“And we don’t throw away good things just because they’re old,” his mother added. “That’s not a good habit, *beta*. If we can fix something, we must use it.”

Shyam didn’t say anything. His throat felt tight. He looked out of the window. A dragonfly zipped past. The sky was golden and still.

The next day, all the students gathered at school for a special welcome session. Some wore brand-new uniforms. Some had colourful school bags. Some had shiny new shoes.

Shyam stood quietly in his old uniform. He felt small.

“New year doesn’t mean new shoes. It means a new you. New learning. New thinking.”

“And we don’t throw away good things just because they’re old. That’s not a good habit. If we can fix something, we must use it.”

“You didn’t get anything new?” Francis asked, pointing to Shyam’s bag.

“Look at mine—it has a pocket that plays music!” another boy grinned.

Shyam looked down. He didn’t reply.

Just then, the headmistress clapped loudly and called out, “Children! Please come to the courtyard. We have a very special guest with us today.”

A tall man stepped forward. He had a white beard and kind eyes. He wore a soft brown *khadi* kurta and sandals. His smile was warm, like early sunshine.

“This is Dr. Gojen Pegu—but you can call him Uncle Green Hands,” said the headmistress. “He teaches people how to care for our Earth.”

The children clapped and sat down under the big mango tree. Uncle Green Hands looked around at the children sitting

cross-legged. “Tell me,” he asked with a twinkle in his eye, “What do you love about nature?” “I love trees. They give us shade,” said Puja.

“I like rivers,” said Tousif.

“I like birds,” whispered Shyam.

Uncle Green Hands nodded happily.

“Wonderful! And how do we take care for these beautiful things?”

A boy raised his hand.

“We shouldn’t throw plastic in rivers.”

“Plant more trees!” added another.

“Lovely answers,” said Uncle Green Hands. “Now let me tell you a story.”

He opened a soft cloth pouch and showed them a handful of round seeds.

“These are from a forest I helped grow.”

The children leaned forward. Their eyes widened.

“You grew a forest?” Francis gasped.

The group was full of awe.

Uncle Green Hands smiled.

“There was once a patch of land filled with plastic, broken glass, and waste. People said nothing could grow there.”

“But we cleaned it up. We planted native trees. We gave them water and care.”



“Soon, small green leaves appeared. Then birds. Then butterflies.”

He pulled out a photograph from his bag. It showed a lush green forest, with tall trees and fluttering birds. The children gasped.

“It’s real?” someone whispered.

“Yes,” said Uncle Green Hands.

“Did children help you?” Shyam asked.

“Yes,” he smiled. “Lots of children. Just like you.” Then he asked, “Would you

like to learn something fun—and help grow a forest too?”

Everyone cheered, “Yes!”

Uncle Green Hands brought out tubs filled with clay, compost, and seeds. He held up a lump.

“This is clay—soft and sticky. It holds everything together.” Then he showed them a handful of dark crumbs.

“This is compost,” he explained. “It’s made from old leaves, fruit peels, and bits of plants. It feeds the soil and helps seeds grow strong.”

Finally, he held out tiny round seeds. “And what are these called?”

“Seeds!” the children shouted together.

Uncle Green Hands laughed. “Very good!”

“We’re going to make seed balls today. These little balls can grow plants even where the ground is too hard to dig.”

Shyam scooped up some wet clay with his fingers. It was cold and squishy.

Uncle Green Hands showed them what to do.

“Take a pinch of clay, a little compost, and one tiny seed. Mix them all together like dough. Then roll it into a ball. That’s your seed ball!”

The children giggled and squished and rolled. Soon, banana leaves were full of little brown seed balls, lined up like sweets.

“We don’t bury them,” Uncle Green Hands said. “We just throw them on dry land. The sun and rain will do the rest.”

They walked to a patch of dry, cracked ground behind the school. It looked dusty and forgotten.

“It looks like nothing can grow here,” someone said.

Uncle Green Hands smiled. “That’s what they said about my forest too.”

One by one, the children gently tossed their seed balls onto the land.

Shyam threw his last one near a stone and whispered, “Grow well, little seed.” His hands were muddy. His heart felt light.

“But remember,” said Uncle Green Hands, “Just throwing seed balls isn’t enough. If we see a sapling grow, we must water it, protect it, and help it live.”

The children nodded. Their eyes sparkled.

Uncle Green Hands stood beside the headmistress and looked at the smiling faces.

“Superheroes are great in stories,” he said. “But in real life, the Earth needs quiet heroes—



kids who use what they have wisely and care for the world around them.”

“Planting trees isn’t enough. We also need to take care of the things we already have.”

He looked at the children. “How can we do that?”

“Don’t waste water!” one child shouted.

“Don’t waste paper!” added another.

“Close the tap when brushing!” someone called out.

Uncle Green Hands nodded. “Yes! And we can reuse bags, bottles, boxes—even uniforms, if they’re still good.”

Then he asked, “Who here wore old shoes or an old uniform today?”

There was a pause. Then—Shyam raised his hand. Three other children did too. The

children were called near him.

Uncle Green Hands smiled wide. “These four children did something special. They didn’t throw away what could still be used. Well done, kids.”

Uncle Green Hands shook hands with them. Shyam was beaming with joy. He stood tall. He looked at his shoes, then at the dry patch behind the school. Maybe one day, that land would become a forest too. He remembered what Father had said:

“New year doesn’t mean new things. It means a better you.”

The writer is a filmmaker and an artist. A graduate of the Film and Television Institute of India, Pune and a two-time National Film Award winner, she recently began writing for children. Her stories focus on emotional depth, environmental awareness, and are rooted in Indian storytelling. This is one of her first stories for young readers.



Oops! Someone forgot to count war as a climate villain! From tanks that guzzle fuel to bombs that leave behind smoke and rubble, wars make our planet cry. Militaries cause 5.5% of greenhouse emissions—more than international aviation and shipping combined! Their carbon footprint ranks just behind the US, China, and India. Even forests, animals, and rivers aren't safe when battles begin. The Ukraine war alone released more pollution than some entire European countries! In Gaza, it's being called ecocide. Maybe that's why Mr. Trump looks sorry here (finally!). Because no matter who wins the war—the Earth always loses.